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132 Bangkok. The tropical monsoon climate divides the year into three seasons, a hot, wet season from late May to November, a cooler, dry season from December to early February, and a hot, 361 dry season from late February to mid-May. The community, scattered over an area of approximately five square miles, was 161 composed of seven neighboring hamlets. In 1954, the population 162 was approximately 1700, divided among 336 households. About 60 per cent of the households were made up of independent families, parents with unmarried children, with an average family [443] size of 5.7 persons. The main occupation of 80 per cent of all families was rice farming.

243 The climate together with the overflowing Chao Phraya [13] river, provided natural conditions for raising a single crop [220] of wet rice. From May or June to February, the principal activities were those connected with rice production. This crop greatly exceeded the needs for local consumption as human food, [433] feed, and seed. The surplus of rice which was sold, was estimated for 1953 as 1.4 times the amount used for all purposes within the village (Janlekha, 1955).

346 Wat Bang Chan, the Buddhist monastery and place for re- 621 ligious exercises, was also the center of social life in the [795] community. When data for this study were being gathered, the one primary school in the village was located on the grounds of the wat. The community was defined simply by the clientele which patronized Wat Bang Chan and this elementary school. [563] Within the area of the community lived a small minority of Thai Moslems who patronized a mosque and school just outside Bang Chan. The few Chinese in the village were considered as part of the Thai-Buddhist community. Information to be presented [028] on food habits refers primarily to habits of the Buddhist majority, although some reference will be made to ways in which Moslem practices differed therefrom.

133 Although for six or more months of the year the fields 243 were covered with water, sometimes to a depth of a meter or 491 more, a year-round road, connecting Bangkok and Minburi, the nearest market town, ran through one edge of the village. Bus 484 service was available along this road, to either Bangkok or [494] Minburi but within the community one went by boat on the network of canals during the wet season, and during the dry season, [503] on foot along the dikes or across fields. From late January through May, when subsidiary canals were apt to be dry, getting about was somewhat difficult. Boat travel was considered easy, but as many families had only one boat, a trip to the store or even to a neighbor's home had to be planned with reference to the activities of other family members.

443 Large scale purchases, as for a ceremony, were always made at a big market, but in general, instead of people going to the market-town, the "market" came to the people. Boat-venders brought not only fresh produce and staples but also sweets, ices, soft drinks, and cooked foods such as Chinese

221 Despite the availability of fish and of vegetables in
435 the canal, the highest cash outlays for family food occurred in this transplanting season. Several factors probably contributed to this: increased food energy needs because of long hours of work, venders again accessible because of high water, cash from sale of last year's crop still in hand, the convenience of cooked foods and snacks, and perhaps the need to replenish household supplies after the long drought, or after their depletion by a ceremony.

221 The two months of September and October during which
[512] the rice grew afforded some respite. People slept a little longer and breakfast was not prepared so early. The skilled cook might take over and could give more attention to food preparation. All who could, took the opportunity to visit
[788] and take trips. A few might go on a pilgrimage. Therefore,
264 in this season, all family members were less often together
224 at the evening meal. Fishing was a continuous occupation,
[43] with some preserving and home craft. Jobs such as selling
356 food in the market were undertaken for ready cash; houses and equipment were built or repaired. Finally the threshing floor was prepared.

[342] High water caused time-consuming inconvenience only in
[33] earth-floored cottages where it was necessary to keep the rice stores and chickens dry, move the cook-stove, and either build plank walks or cook standing ankle deep in water.

243 By November, the earliest varieties of rice matured.
221 Those who owned several rice fields could put at least one into an early type. Many persons, by then short of rice, were glad to be thus tided over. One grandmother divided her first harvest among her several long-since-independent married children; 2 tangs[1] of milled rice per family, 40 for herself.

The heroic labor of harvest occupied December, January, and February. Farmers raced against the all-too-fast lowering of the water in the canals, without which sheaves could
[460] not be moved and buyers could not come for the paddy. People worked all daylight hours in the fields, threshed far into
[226] the night. At this time also many varieties of fish matured
434 and men fished night after night. Just when the convenience
426 of purchased food was greatest, cash was exhausted. With
443 rice money in sight, venders might be generous with credit, but they could navigate only the larger canals, so were not available to many.

000 There was an important psychological difference between

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[504] 1. One tang equals 20 liters. Milled rice weighs about 16 kg. per tang.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY FARE IN BANG CHAN

As we turn to a detailed description of the family fare, we should like to point out that starvation was unknown in Bang Chan. Although much room remains for improvement in diet, "hollow hunger" was uncommon. In the few times when disastrous flood destroyed the year's crop, the government was able to provide enough rice so that it need not be rationed. People still ate their fill. Even floods had their advantage: one could fish out the window. That gross caloric undernutrition was rare was borne out by examination of the school children (Hauck, 1956). "On the average . . . Bang Chan children could not be considered as markedly underweight. Few were so thin that one could 'count their ribs' and still fewer would be considered plump by American standards." In a random sample of village households that included about 10% of the population, the heaviest man weighed 69 kg. (151.8 pounds) and the heaviest woman 70 kg. (154 pounds). We noted no more than half a dozen adults who appeared to be "overweight." Most were middle aged or older, and none of them did strenuous field work.

Sources of Food

Home Production, Storage and Preservation

Rice. --Rice is an essential part of any Thai meal. The majority of the rice farmers in Bang Chan had rice for home consumption milled for them at Minburi. In general, they took their own paddy to the mill, and brought the resulting milled rice home, where it was stored in a box or mat-bin. Although, according to a recent survey (Goldsen and Ralis, 1957) nearly a third of the households owned a home rice mill, undermilled or home-pounded rice was not widely used in Bang Chan. Information on this point was obtained for 333 of 336 "kitchen-unit"[1] households in the village. Of these 5 consumed home-milled rice only, 51 used home-milled rice in major part, 73 in minor part, and 199 not at all.

In households where home-milled rice was used, during June enough would be pounded to last until harvest, at which time hands were sore and bleeding from the field work and home pounding was impossible. At the time when data for the present report were being gathered, most families took paddy to the mill when water in the canal was high enough so that it could be transported by boat. If a farmer on a subsidiary

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1. In some large houses, two related family groups lived together but maintained separate kitchens.

7: Janlekha X-4,5 (1948-1953)1956 AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bangchan

CHAPTER II

THE COMMUNITY

Geography

131 The community of Bangchan is situated some twenty road-miles northeast of Bangkok in the heart of the economically all-important commercial rice growing area of central 361 Thailand. Surrounded by their rice fields, the population [161] of about 1,600 persons lives on some three hundred small [503] family homesteads scattered along a half dozen connecting *[243] canals. The community occupies an area of 6,500 rai,[1] or 2,600 acres, all of which, with the exception of about 300 rai of homesites and narrow strips bordering canals, is given over to the production of wet rice.

134 The soil of Bangchan area is heavy dark clay with *243 an impervious layer at a depth of about six to eight inches and is suited only to rice growing.

• 133 The area is essentially flat, rising slightly toward 312 the north. It receives, in addition to rain water, irrigation water channeled into it through the Saen-saeb Canal one mile to the south, Samwa Canal one mile to the east, and Khlong-song Canal one mile to the north.[2]

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[804] 1. One rai is equal to two-fifths of an acre.

2. See map on page 162.